



# News Release

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## **State officials advise: be known for great grilling, not making people sick**

**OLYMPIA** — Food safety experts from the Department of Health want people to know how to [protect themselves and their loved ones from foodborne illnesses](#), especially when preparing foods for picnics and barbecues during warm weather.

“Bacteria in or on food can multiply quickly in warm weather,” explains State Health Officer Dr. Kathy Lofy. “By making sure food is prepared, cooked, and served properly you can reduce the risk of foodborne illnesses and be well-known for great barbecues and picnics instead of for making people sick.”

[Safeguards can be taken when preparing foods to be eaten outdoors](#), such as using a food thermometer to make sure that meat and poultry are cooked at the correct temperature. You should also keep other foods away from raw meats by placing the meats in sealed containers or wrapped in plastic bags to prevent juices from getting on other foods.

Other strategies to avoid foodborne illness include washing hands before and after preparing food; keeping cold foods cold (below 40 degrees Fahrenheit) and hot foods hot (above 140 degrees Fahrenheit); and making sure to put leftovers back in the fridge or cooler as soon as possible. You should never leave perishable food out for more than two hours – less time if it’s hot out – and use an insulated cooler with plenty of ice or freezer packs placed all around the food to keep it at 40 degrees Fahrenheit or below.

Other tips include keeping drinks in a separate cooler from the food since the beverage cooler will be opened frequently while the food cooler stays closed and cold. If possible, transport the cooler in the air-conditioned part of your car, rather than in a hot trunk.

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It's a common belief that most food-related illnesses come from eating in places like restaurants but actually, many are caused by mistakes made by people cooking for family and friends.

Other ways to avoid illness from food are found on the [Food Safety Program's website](#).

The [Department of Health website](#) ([www.doh.wa.gov](http://www.doh.wa.gov)) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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